

GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA

INFORMATION NOTE

Armed Group Linked to Radical Opposition Planned Attacks Against Police in May; 8 Members Detained

**Evidence points to Irakli Okruashvili, leader of the opposition “Georgian Party,”
as directing the activities of a 200-strong group of fighters from Russia**

Tbilisi • June 23, 2011

On June 22, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) detained eight Georgian citizens suspected of organizing an armed group to attack Georgian police checkpoints near the line of Russian occupation, as well as regional police headquarters in the town of Gori. Some of the detained are members of the opposition “Georgian Party,” led by former defense minister Irakli Okruashvili; all suspects were arrested in Georgia’s central Shida Kartli region.

According to the evidence gathered thus far, the attacks were planned to coincide with recent demonstrations led by radical opposition parties in Tbilisi on May 25-26, and aimed at further destabilizing the country. The organizers aborted their plans after the MIA bolstered security at its checkpoints on the occupation line, and also in light of the failure of the demonstrations to draw broad public support. After interviewing the detainees, police found large stocks of weapons and ammunition in the village of Jariasheni in the Shida Kartli region, close to the line of Russian occupation.

Today, the MIA released videotaped testimonies of several detainees, as well as court approved intercepts of telephone communications they had with each other and with Okruashvili. The videotaped testimonies are available on the MIA website <http://police.ge/index.php?m=8&newsid=2584&lng=eng>.

The testimonies and recordings reveal that Okruashvili had planned to illegally enter Georgia from Vladikavkaz, Russia, together with “200 armed men” believed by several suspects to be “Russian special forces fighters” through Russian-occupied Tskhinvali Region/“South Ossetia.” The attacks would have targeted Georgian police in the Shida Kartli region. Members of the “Georgian Party” and their collaborators had planned to meet Okruashvili and his forces in the village of Jariasheni of Gori district, close to the line of Russian occupation. They intended to transport Okruashvili and the armed group via truck to the nearest Georgian police checkpoint. After neutralizing a few police checkpoints on their way, the group planned to attack the MIA’s Special Forces base in the village of Karaleti and the regional police headquarters in the town of Gori, eventually aiming to arrive in the capital Tbilisi at the peak of the street protests on May 25-26.

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After the plans were aborted, Okruashvili never entered Georgia and remains at large. In 2008, Okruashvili was convicted of extortion and sentenced to 11 years in prison.

The detained individuals have been charged with organizing an illegal armed group under Article 223 of Georgia's Criminal Code. Seven more members of the group are being sought by the police. Some are suspected of being in hiding in the Russian-occupied Georgian territory of Tskhinvali Region/"South Ossetia."

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